

of its military hardware. Nor is the U.S. or Israel about to accept a Palestinian state. In its specifics, Lerner's proposal is a nonstarter.

But in a more general sense, Lerner is right to argue that progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not just important for its own sake, but also could help resolve the Gulf conflict. The Arab states assisting the U.S. would gain in legitimacy; Saddam Hussein, who symbolizes the armed struggle route to Palestinian rights, would lose his appeal; and importantly, Iraq would lose the option of diverting attention from the Gulf crisis with an attack on Israel.

Ironically—and this brings me to Lerner's third question—American policy seems one of de facto linkage of the wrong sort. The Bush administration thus far has shown an unwillingness to move on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict until the Gulf conflict is over. The administration is right in not wanting it to appear that Saddam Hussein has caused a major change in U.S. policy, but that is no reason not to pursue a two-track policy in the Middle East. The U.S. spent a year in unsuccessful efforts to get the Shamir government to seriously pursue Shamir's *own* proposal for Palestinian elections in the Territories. The U.S. was finally reaching a moment of truth on Shamir's proposal when Iraq invaded Kuwait. Bush should take this opportunity to say that the U.S. will not allow Saddam Hussein to tie the two conflicts together; neither will it allow Shamir to use the Gulf crisis as an excuse for further delay. In particular the U.S. must act vigorously to halt the rapid expansion of the settler population in the West Bank, which is now occurring. We must insist that the Gulf crisis not be used as a cover which allows

the Israeli right wing to eliminate the possibility of "land for peace" negotiations somewhere down the line.

The Shamir government is so determined to retain the West Bank permanently that even freezing the current level of settlement will require a major American effort. Jewish voices will therefore have to strongly insist upon such a freeze. If Iraq is forced out of Kuwait there will be a great deal of interest in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it may take much longer to get Iraq out than anyone presently anticipates. If in the meantime the settler population grows by twenty or thirty percent, the delicate balance within Israeli politics may be permanently upset, and the occupation of the West Bank may continue indefinitely.

My policy prescription is this:

- Keep the focus on the international consensus issue of forcing Iraq out of Kuwait.
- Build on the embargo and the current unprecedented level of international cooperation to put in place a special international mechanism which will block Iraq's access to nuclear weapons and which will remain in place even after the crisis has subsided.
- Place the military in Saudi Arabia under a United Nations flag and expand international participation, with a special stress on Soviet involvement.
- Commit only the number of troops required to contain Iraq militarily.
- Plan for a long-term embargo of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil as the primary vehicle for putting pressure on Iraq.
- Vigorously pursue Israeli-Palestinian peace with an immediate focus on a freeze on settlement expansion.
- Sit tight and keep the powder dry. □

DANIEL ELLSBERG

Tie him to the mast, it's too late to put wax in his ears: Michael Lerner has succumbed to the siren songs of General Dugan's Air Force briefers, with their "surgical" solution to Iraq's offensive capabilities.

As in the past, the essence of their refrain—the very part that has captivated Lerner—has been that if the president just turns the Air Force loose, the troops of rival services—the Army, Navy, and Marines—can all stay home safely with their families and enjoy the war vicariously by watching dramatic reconstructions: Tom

Cruise as Top Gun, *not* as Ron Kovic.

The argument for preventive war against Iraq—which is what Lerner is endorsing here, as part of a larger Middle East policy—is about as persuasive in the present circumstances as it ever gets. And it has, evidently, persuaded a lot of people besides Lerner, including high officials throughout the Middle East, opinion-makers in the American media—and, according to a number of journalists, many of the highest officials in the Bush administration.

For that reason, a U.S.-initiated offensive against the full range of Iraqi command structures and military capabilities has been, without any urging from *Tikkun*, a lively option from the outset for American forces in

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Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. It is, in fact, the one to bet on after the buildup is complete—unless growing numbers of Americans, Congressional leaders, and influential foreign states begin to oppose it vigorously; or unless Saddam backs down.

Of course, given the limits of the objectives endorsed by the UN, Saddam could short-circuit the U.S. attack by withdrawing from Kuwait and releasing all hostages, and keep his military forces intact. Administration sources show their real priorities—indistinguishable from Lerner's—by describing this possibility to journalists as "the nightmare scenario."

Saddam would be wise to back down in this fashion, before international forces strike. He may yet back down, with or without face-saving concessions from the Arab states. But he may not. By the same token, he would probably not be wise enough to accept Lerner's hypothetical ultimatum, which would offer a Palestinian state in exchange for Iraq's radical disarmament. What then?

Should we encourage the administration to carry out its present almost-official threats of offensive action "if necessary"? (This is the effective impact, I believe, of Lerner's analysis.) Or should we—as I believe—do all we can to discourage the U.S. government from starting a war against Iraq?

What will happen in the Middle East, if it comes to war, is not the utopian Air Force dream of General Dugan, now shared by the editor of *Tikkun*. The Air Force strategy will be only *part* of the war, the fun part—except that even it won't work as fully, quickly, or antiseptically as the briefers have promised. There will be more blood in U.S. cockpits and a lot more blood on the ground, civilians' and childrens', not only in Iraq but in Israel and Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It is striking that Lerner, like most proponents of preventive war, fails to provide any estimate whatever of this "butcher's bill."

And there will be a ground war too. Whatever the Air Force and *Tikkun* recommend, the other chiefs will not be satisfied to let the Army and Marines sit idly by with folded hands while the Air Force and carrier planes go for the gold. Nor will the commander-in-chief let Iraqi armed forces that survive air attacks—remnants that could be quite sizeable and tenacious—continue to hold on to Kuwait and to surviving American hostages. He will send the heavy tank divisions we have already deployed to carry out what they have been told is their main mission: the liberation of Kuwait, or what the bombers have left of it.

The president probably shares Lerner's reluctance to see a ground invasion of Iraq itself. But he may or may not be able to abide for long the continued hostility, the threats to hostages, and the appeals to holy war and



terrorism by Saddam's successors in Baghdad. If, as is not unlikely, he finally decides to send the tanks and ground troops into Iraq to oust them, then the replay of the Six-Day War (extended by some weeks) will be followed by endless reruns of Vietnam.

"Low-intensity warfare" could then be a long-term prospect for us not only in Iraq but throughout the Arab and Islamic world (perhaps as far away as Indonesia). The U.S. would be helping authoritarian regimes—deeply tainted by their association with this U.S./Israeli attack on an Arab and Muslim country—repress uprisings of infuriated masses.

The last two prospects, to be sure, are just possibilities. There are more: Saddam's threats to destroy oil fields in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, for one; and the even more catastrophic prospects of preemptive attacks, chemical warfare, and global terrorism.

Perhaps all these threats are bluffs, or exaggerated, as some advocates of an American attack claim. Who really knows? Serious consideration of preventive war demands at least some effort to address these ominous uncertainties—as Lerner fails to do. But in the end, after the best calculations, an American-initiated offensive would be a grand experiment, a roll of the iron dice. In view of these risks, the case *against* preventive war—addressed so inadequately in Lerner's discussion—seems to me overwhelming.

How then are we to deal with the real long-run threats presented by the military capabilities, the ruthlessness, the chemical and the possibility of future nuclear capabilities that fuel the ambitions of Saddam Hussein—and leaders like him the world over? Here are elements of a program addressed both to immediate and long-run needs:

- Continue the UN embargo and blockade of Iraq—a "porous blockade" that does not exclude essential food and medicine—as long as necessary in order to force Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Thus, we deny

Iraq any rewards for its aggression and impose very heavy, ongoing costs in revenue and imports as long as the aggression lasts.

- Reverse the buildup of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia. Remove immediately those units not needed for defensive operations; then replace the U.S. component as fully and rapidly as possible with regional Arab and other allied forces. This would eliminate the hair-trigger posture that now may tempt either side to preempt. It would also reduce the financial and political burden of America's continuing involvement so that the embargo has time to work.

- As the Soviets have proposed: put the multilateral defensive forces in Saudi Arabia and the blockade forces under UN command, under the authority of the Military Staff Committee of the UN Security Council.

- Take steps, as François Mitterrand proposed to the UN in September, to achieve, in the wake of an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, rapid resolution of the Palestinian and Lebanese conflicts in an international conference. Follow this conference with a process of mutually agreed regional arms reductions.

- Bring to the top of the international agenda, as Eduard Shevardnadze has urged, the following measures: the tightening and expansion of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including "as a matter of utmost urgency" an immediate end to nuclear tests; the elimination of chemical weapons; the control of conventional arms sales. Build up a long-term rapid-response UN

peacekeeping force in the region.

The first three points include a peacekeeping force in the Gulf and therefore can buy safety from further aggression from Iraq or others in the region for as long as needed, while the comprehensive diplomatic efforts establish a more fundamental basis for common security.

Progress in these various negotiations is hardly guaranteed. Yet with the cold war hardly over, and the spirit of international unity aroused by this crisis, the chances look better than they ever have before. And they look a lot better, overall, than the chances of avoiding catastrophe in a preventive war or series of wars.

Indeed, if progress is not sought and achieved along all these various lines, then even the most successful preventive attack will not buy the long-term security in the region that is its goal. Unless permanently occupied, a hostile and vengeful Iraq, once violently disarmed, would use its oil wealth to rebuild its offensive capability as soon as possible—and to buy or develop nuclear weaponry. This would challenge the Air Force to repeat its "surgery" every decade, like mowing the lawn. And other states would need the same treatment.

That prospect ought to concentrate our minds wonderfully on the pursuit of alternatives. As Shevardnadze said in reference to nuclear nonproliferation: "It is time to trigger off the emergency systems in order to save the situation." If it took Saddam Hussein, and General Dugan, to set off these global alarms, we may yet thank them both. □

MICHAEL LERNER RESPONDS

Mitterrand, Bush, and other leaders are making it clear to their counterparts in all the Arab states that they will press Israel once the Kuwait business is resolved (though for appearance's sake they will continue to reject the *overt* quid pro quo linkage that Hussein and Arafat have advocated). But this is only a question of timing—while publicly denouncing any explicit linkage, Bush privately reassures his allies that he will vigorously pressure Israel once Saddam is out of Kuwait. It's too late to stop linkage—David Harris's desire to totally separate the Gulf crisis from the Israeli-Arab conflict is entirely fanciful—the question is *what kind of linkage*. The real defense of Israel's interests requires us to insist that linkage be based *not* on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait (which is what Bush, Mitterrand, and others have been suggesting), but rather on the dismantling of the Iraqi offensive military capacity (IOMC). If Harris and other Jewish leaders were not so naive, they would understand that Israel itself has created linkage. It has put the Pales-

tinians back on the world's agenda by starting new settlements in East Jerusalem. The UN's obvious anti-Semitism and outrageous double standards in dealing with Israel do not change the fact that the international community is right to insist that Israel end its occupation of the homeland of a million-and-a-half Palestinians. Friends of Israel need to link a recognition of Palestinian rights with the comprehensive three-part plan I have outlined here.

Meanwhile, Harris, leader of the American Jewish Committee, wants us to believe that "the essence of ... the current Israeli peace initiative" is launching direct talks, holding elections, and seeking confidence-building measures. Where has this man been in the past two years as the U.S. government tried desperately to get Shamir to talk with Palestinians and implement elections? Where was Harris when even hard-liner Yitzchak Rabin supported the Labor Party and withdrew from the coalition government precisely because Shamir was not serious about negotiations? Anyone who really cares